

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for switching signals in a network, comprising:
 - 5 multiple first switch fabrics to perform facility protection switching on the signals; and
 - a second switch fabric coupled to the first switch fabrics to switch a subset of the signals in a non-facility protection switching manner among the first switch fabrics.
- 10 2. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the switch fabrics are coupled to a single point of control.
- 15 3. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics include less configuration than the second switch fabric.
4. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics include less granularity than the second switch fabric.
- 20 5. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics also perform local switching.
6. The apparatus according to Claim 1 further including redundant first or second switch fabrics.
- 25 7. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first or second switch fabrics support Time Division Multiplexing (TDM), fixed-length switching, or variable-length switching.
- 30 8. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics

perform facility protection switching within a predetermined time span in response to multiple simultaneous failures in the network.

5 9. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the coupling between the first and second switch fabrics is configurable.

10 10. The apparatus according to Claim 1 further including a content processor coupled to and between the first and second switch fabric to convert the signals from a first protocol to a second protocol.

15 11. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the facility protection switching includes Linear Automatic Protection Switching (LAPS), Unidirectional Path Switched Ring (UPSR) protection switching, Bidirectional Line Switched Ring (BLSR) protection switching, and 1:n protection switching.

20 12. A method for switching signals in a network, comprising:
 performing facility protection switching of the signals by multiple first switch fabrics; and
 switching a subset of the signals in a non-facility protection switching manner among the multiple first switch fabrics by a second switch fabric.

25 13. The method according to Claim 12 further including controlling the switch fabrics via a single point of control.

14. The method according to Claim 12 further including configuring the first switch fabrics less than the second switch fabric.

30 15. The method according to Claim 12 further including processing the signals with the first switch fabrics with less granularity than the second switch

fabric.

16. The method according to Claim 12 further including performing local switching with the multiple first switch fabrics.

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17. The method according to Claim 12 further including supporting redundant facility protection switching and redundant non-facility protection switching.

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18. The method according to Claim 12 further including operating the first and second switch fabrics using Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) switching, fixed-length switching, or variable-length switching.

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19. The method according to Claim 12 wherein performing facility protection switching occurs within a predetermined time span in response to multiple simultaneous failures in the network.

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20. The method according to Claim 12 further including adjustably configuring coupling between the multiple first switch fabrics and the second switch fabric.

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21. The method according to Claim 12 further including converting the signals from a first communications protocol to a second communications protocol.

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22. The method according to Claim 12 wherein the facility protection switching includes Linear Automatic Protection Switching (LAPS), Unidirectional Path Switched Ring (UPSR) protection switching, Bidirectional Line Switched Ring (BLSR) protection switching, and 1:n protection switching.

23. An apparatus for switching signals in a network, comprising:
 - first means for performing facility protection switching on the signals; and
 - 5 second means for switching a subset of the signals among the first means in a non-facility protection switching manner.